the same thought. It can do this because it is meant for the eye and not for the ear. While it may be and is read aloud, even a scholar usually cannot understand an unfamiliar passage when it comes only through the ear.

It may seem that so artificial a language is an unmitigated handicap and that the Chinese would do well to abandon it for one more nearly in accord with the colloquial. However, much can be said for it. Being independent of any one form of the vernacular it has been understood by scholars all over the Empire and so has helped to give unity to the Chinese. Then, too, although the classical style should not be written in the singular, but in the plural, for there have been various forms of it, a scholar who has mastered it has opened to him all the literature of past generations. It has not changed so rapidly as have the vernaculars.

Still, the Chinese classical language presents difficulties. It is highly artificial. It is often replete with allusions and quotations and to appreciate and even to understand much of it the reader has to bring to it a vast store of knowledge of existing literature. Many individual characters have several widely different meanings and frequently in a particular passage only the context determines which one is intended. Although there are initial, terminal, and transitional words and phrases, the paucity of other punctuation in most of the texts is often confusing. Then, too, the presence of proper names with nothing to distinguish them as such except the context and the knowledge of the reader not infrequently leads to ambiguity. The confusion is heightened by the fact that a Chinese often has a number of given names or

designations. It is only by going through a prodigious amount of literature and especially by memorizing quantities of it that the scholar obtains a kind of sixth sense which enables him to divine which of several readings is correct. Even the perusal of the classical language, therefore, requires long preparation.

Composition is still more of a task. Few Occidentals have achieved an acceptable style and many a modern Chinese who is the finished product of the present-day curriculum is far from adept. Composition in the literary language is so difficult partly because of the skill required in the use of the various auxiliary particles, partly on account of the fine distinctions which must be